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Bahrain: Evidence of security forces' brutality revealed

In a new report released today, *Bloodied but Unbowed: Unwarranted State Violence against Bahraini Protesters*, the organization documents how security forces used live ammunition and extreme force against protesters in February without warning and impeded and assaulted medical staff trying to help the wounded.

The report, which is based on firsthand testimonies given to an Amnesty International team in Bahrain, comes as the country is gripped by further violence, after Saudi Arabian and UAE forces entered the small Gulf state three days ago and Bahrain's King declared a national state of emergency.

"It is alarming to see the Bahraini authorities now again resorting to the same tactics that they used against protesters in February but on an even more intensive scale," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"It appears that the government has decided that the way to deal with protests is through violent repression, a totally unsustainable position and one which sets an ominous example in a region where other governments are also facing popular calls for change."

"The authorities must exercise proper control over the security forces, uphold and protect the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, including the right to peaceful protest."

Dr Hanı Mowafi, a US medical doctor who was part of the Amnesty International team, found a pattern of fatal and serious injuries during February's violence showing that the security forces used live ammunition at close range, and apparently targeted protesters' heads, chests and abdomens. They also fired medium-to-large calibre bullets from high-powered rifles on 18 February.

The worst violence before today took place early on the morning of 17 February, when five people were killed. Witnesses told Amnesty International that, in scenes that would be repeated on 16 March, tanks blocked access to the Pearl Roundabout as police used shotguns as well as tear gas, batons and rubber bullets to disperse protesters, many of whom were camping there.

One witness told Amnesty International that on 17 February riot police were shooting from different angles, including from a bridge over the roundabout, while protesters desperately ran for cover.

Among the injured were people clearly identifiable as medical workers, who were targeted by police while trying to help wounded protesters at or near the roundabout.

On 3 March Bahrain's Minister of Social Development, visiting London, told Amnesty International that the Bahraini government was holding an investigation into the killings that would report directly to the King, and that two members of the security forces had been taken into custody. Amnesty International is calling for an independent investigation that is both thorough and transparent.

"All the actions of the security forces against protesters since February must be fully and independently investigated. Those responsible for ordering and unleash lethal force against peaceful protesters must be identified and held to account."

"There must be no impunity for unlawful killings, assaults and other abuses against both protesters and medical staff."

Amnesty International has identified some of the ammunition found in the aftermath of the raid on Pearl Roundabout on 17 February.

They include US-made tear gas canisters, US-made 37mm rubber multi-baton rounds, French-made tear gas grenades, and French-made rubber “dispersion” grenades, which fragment into 18 pieces and produce a loud sound effect.

Amnesty International called on governments who supply weapons to Bahrain to immediately suspend the transfer of weapons, munitions and related equipment that could be used to commit further human rights violations, and to urgently review all arms supplies and training support to Bahrain’s military, security and police forces.

Following the Bahraini security forces’ use of unwarranted force against protesters, the UK government revoked some licences for arms exports to Bahrain, and the French authorities have suspended the export of security equipment to Bahrain.

Read some of the powerful [witness testimonies](#) contained in the report.

Notes for editors

- Amnesty International conducted a fact-finding mission to Bahrain between 20-26 February. The delegation comprised two Amnesty International researchers and a US medical doctor specialized in emergency care and public health. The delegation interviewed witnesses to the violent events of mid-February, victims and their relatives, and hospital and mortuary staff. They also met government officials and human rights activists.
- Read the full report of *[Bloodied but Unbowed: Unwarranted State Violence against Bahraini Protesters](#)*
- Most of the photos in the report can be made available free of charge on request from the Amnesty International Press Office (+44 20 7413 5556)

Interviews

Contact the Amnesty International Press Office (+44 20 7413 5556) if you would like to arrange interviews. Available for interview on this report:

- Amnesty International spokespeople from London, including researchers that drew up the report
- Dr Hani Mowafi, the US-based medical doctor who travelled with the delegation
- Jaf'er Hassan and Jameel Abdullah, ambulance drivers featured in the report (subject to ongoing work commitments in Bahrain).